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Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 114: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/46/11 and Add.1 and 2)

1. Mr. ALI (Chairman, Committee on Contributions), introducing the report of the Committee (A/46/11 and Add.1 and 2), noted that the current year's report contained a recommended new scale of assessments which reflected the changes in the world economic situation and the membership of the United Nations. Despite the General Assembly's explicit wish to decide the period of applicability of the new scale, the Committee on Contributions recommended that it be adopted for the years 1992, 1993 and 1994, in accordance with rule 160 of the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure.

2. In reviewing the proposed scale, it should be remembered that the national income data used in its preparation were those provided by Member States to the Statistical Office of the United Nations. They reflected the changes in the economic situation of Member States between 1980 and 1989. Notwithstanding the changes, the 10 largest contributors would continue to pay 77.69 per cent of the Organization's expenses, which represented an increase of 17 points over the current total. Eighty-two Member States were assessed at 0.01 per cent, eight at 0.02 per cent and seven at 0.03 per cent.

3. It should also be emphasized that the proposed scale was prepared in strict adherence to the instructions contained in General Assembly resolution 45/256 A and C. With the exception of the increase in the per capita income limit of the low per capita income allowance formula from $2,200 to $2,600, the methodology used was identical to the one for the current scale of assessments. The effects of the methodology's application to the national income data were shown step by step in annex I of the Committee's report.

4. As a result of the recent admission of several new Member States, the proposed scale was already out of date. However, as the Committee had already made provision for the incorporation of the two Korean States, the proposed scale required only minor adjustments. The United Nations Statistical Office had calculated the assessment rates for the three Baltic States on the basis of the income data provided by them, using the same methodology as for all other Member States and the exchange rates in effect in the Soviet Union during the years 1980 to 1989. It was proposed that the assessments of the three countries, which amounted to a combined rate of 0.30 per cent, should be deducted from the rate proposed for the USSR, effectively reducing the latter rate to 9.11 per cent. The Statistical Office had also calculated assessment rates of 0.01 per cent for the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. It was proposed that those rates should be added to the scale total, thus increasing it to 100.02 per cent. The effect of the increased scale total would be a slight reduction of the actual assessments of all Member States during the scale's period of applicability. It would also be necessary to add the names of the three Baltic States, the Republic of the

Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of the Committee's recommendation, which dealt respectively with the contribution for the year of admission, the basis of assessment for 1991 and 1992 and the advances to the Working Fund.

5. The Committee on Contributions was also recommending new rates of assessment for non-Member States, which formed the basis for the calculation of the flat annual fees charges to them.

6. In accordance with past practice, the report contained an addendum which provided information on cash payments received during 1989 and 1990 in respect of assessed and voluntary contributions by Member States and non-Member States to each of the organizations within the United Nations system. In an effort to synchronize the publication of that information with the biennial budget cycle now followed by the entire United Nations system, the Secretariat proposed to issue the next addendum during the forty-ninth session for the years 1991 to 1993 and every other year thereafter.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/46/320 and A/46/377; A/C.5/46/2, A/C.5/46/4 and Add.1, A/C.5/46/7, A/C.5/46/9, A/C.5/46/13, A/C.5/46/16 and A/C.5/46/21)

7. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that at a time when the United Nations was being recognized and utilized as a major instrument for international peace, security and development, the need to have an efficient Secretariat was greater than ever. In order to enable the staff of the Organization to do its best, it was necessary to improve the environment in which it worked through a system of career development, training, quick, fair and transparent administration of justice and the adoption of modern management practices. However, that was not a substitute for the recruitment of talented personnel with the highest level of competence, efficiency and integrity.

8. As the United Nations was an international organization, it had to recruit its personnel from all Member States and, in that connection, it was to be noted that the number of unrepresented Member States had decreased from 11 in 1990 to nine on 30 June 1991. On the other hand, it had been disappointing to learn that the number of underrepresented Member States had increased from 19 to 24 in the same period. More effort was needed in that area. Nevertheless, as table C of document A/46/370 indicated, the representation of the developing countries in the Secretariat had increased over the period from 1987 to 1991, which constituted a positive development.

9. The principle of equitable geographical distribution had been translated into a concrete system of desirable ranges of geographical representation for the Member States which was used for estimating the comparative representation of the nationals of each Member State. That representation could be improved by increasing the number of posts subject to geographical distribution. At the same time, recruitment to the other posts should be done in such a way

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

that the balance achieved in posts subject to geographical distribution was not distorted.

10. With respect to the factors taken into account in establishing the desirable ranges, it was to be noted that the weight of the population factor had been reduced from 7.2 per cent to 5 per cent in 1987. That had not been an equitable step and accordingly General Assembly resolution 42/220 had recommended that the need to increase the weightage of the population factor should be taken into account. His delegation supported that proposal and hoped that the previous weightage would be restored to the population factor. It also believed that in order to give the composition of the Secretariat a more universal character, an effort should be made to decrease the gap between the membership and contribution factors. The Secretary-General had offered several options which constituted a sound basis for resolving that complex issue. It was to be hoped that Member States would enter into negotiations on the issue with an open and flexible mind in order to find a satisfactory solution.

11. His delegation strongly supported increasing the representation of women in the Secretariat, as called for in General Assembly resolutions 45/125 and 45/239. Although the percentage of women in geographical posts had increased slightly from 28.30 per cent in 1990 to 29.19 per cent in June 1991, it had not been possible, unfortunately, to achieve the target of 30 per cent by the end of 1990. It was necessary to recognize that meeting the new target of 35 per cent by 1995 would require further concerted efforts. It was to be hoped that the measures already taken by the Secretary-General would show better results in the coming years. Nevertheless, he urged the Secretary-General to increase the recruitment of qualified women from the developing countries. In the year ending 30 June 1991, only 43.9 per cent of women recruited had been from the developing countries.

12. With regard to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on rotation of staff within the United Nations (A/46/326), his delegation considered mobility within the United Nations system to be very important and felt it needed greater attention. A systematic mobility and rotation programme linked to career development should be instituted. He hoped that the JIU recommendations would receive serious and prompt consideration from the Office of Human Resources Management.

13. As concerned the report of the Secretary-General on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations (A/C.5/46/4), Bangladesh attached great importance to the matter and regretted that the Secretary-General had had to report that the number of new cases of arrest and detention of officials continued to remain high. It was, however, encouraging to note that there had been positive developments in several long-standing cases. He hoped that the response of the Organization to such cases would continue to be strengthened, and expressed full support for the measures taken

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

by the Secretary-General to ensure the security of international civil servants.

14. Mr. KRYZHANIVSKIY (Ukraine) said that his country attached great significance to the new ways in which it was participating in the activities of international organizations, on the basis of generally accepted norms of international public administration, particularly Article 101(3) of the Charter. Until recently, Ukraine was one of the countries whose nationals worked for the United Nations Secretariat primarily on fixed-term contracts. On 30 June 1990, for instance, only 8 per cent of them had permanent contracts. Currently, instead, the figure was close to 60 per cent. However, Ukraine would continue to avail itself of secondment. On the one hand, his Government was interested in attracting specialists with experience at the United Nations, expecially since the bodies dealing with foreign affairs and foreign trade had expanded as a result of Ukraine's adoption of the Declaration of Independence Act. Moreover, the United Nations as well would benefit from the mobility of Secretariat staff. Although in administrative, budgetary and financial areas, for instance, there had to be a permanent manning table of staff versed in the particularities of the Organization, in the political and public information fields, instead, it was very important to have input from individuals enriched by their direct experience of the changes that had taken place in the contemporary world. Consequently, a certain proportion had to be maintained between the number of Secretariat staff on permanent contracts and those on fixed-term contracts. Perhaps, as recommended by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, the ratio should be one to one.

15. He expressed satisfaction at the amendment to the Staff Regulations proposed by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/46/9, since it would simplify the system of secondment and put it on a solid legal footing. Ukraine had for some time been meeting its obligations in that connection. Secondment was an understanding between three parties: the staff member, the administration and the Government concerned, and staffing policies should not undermine the interests of any of the parties. During the last year, without consulting his Government, the Legal Counsel had repeatedly determined that Ukraine had not observed the necessary conditions for a valid secondment. It had to be asked on what basis the Legal Counsel had arrogated the right to decide such cases unilaterally.

16. His delegation did not think that resolution 35/210 I, regarding the possibility of replacement of staff by candidates of the same nationality in the case of underrepresented countries, had lost its timeliness. In particular, it would be premature to terminate that system in the case of Ukraine, whose representation had declined in the last few years. The possibility of external recruitment had diminished in recent years, when preference had been given to internal candidates. While that practice might have been justified in view of the recruitment freeze, equal opportunities should now be given to internal and external candidates.

(Mr. Kryzhanivskiy, Ukraine)

17. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on alternative options for desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above (A/C.5/46/2), it was clear that the mid-point for a given State would vary, under the different options, by a few posts at most. Moreover, the admission to the United Nations of new Members made it necessary to review the desirable ranges. Ukraine therefore felt that all the political implications of modifying the desirable ranges had to be weighed carefully, in order to achieve an equitable geographical distribution. Any decision should be taken on the basis of a broad consensus.

18. Ukraine favoured efforts to increase the representation of women in the Secretariat, which should not run counter to the general principle of equitable geographical distribution, and it was prepared to present highly qualified candidates in the competitive examinations for P-3 posts.

19. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that the United Nations must shed its cumbersome and archaic structure and adopt a streamlined organization with well-defined personnel policies and procedures. Her delegation supported the procedures outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on secondment from government service (A/C.5/46/9), on the understanding that those procedures would be universally applied and that all pertinent documentation from all parties would be recognized as sufficient evidence of the validity of the secondment. It should be noted, however, that the amendments proposed did not mention the right of the seconded staff member to be re-employed by his or her home Government. That aspect of secondment must be stipulated in writing to ensure that it was understood. In order to make the conditions of secondment absolutely clear to the three parties concerned, her delegation suggested the following amendment to new paragraph (c) to annex II of the Staff Regulations proposed by the Secretary-General:

> "(c) The letter of appointment for a staff member on secondment from government service which is signed by the staff member and by or on behalf of the Secretary-General, and relevant supporting documentation of the terms and conditions of secondment agreed to by the Member State and the staff member, shall be [...] proof for all purposes of the existence and validity of secondment from government service to the Organization for the period stated in the letter of appointment."

Secondment could and should be used to the advantage of the United Nations system as long as it was practised on a limited basis. It could be an effective means of attracting high-calibre staff when state-of-the-art technical skills were needed or when temporary posts had to be filled.

20. The United States agreed with the Secretary-General's conclusion that the replacement procedure should cease. If the paramount consideration in the selection of Secretariat staff was indeed the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, the Secretary-General must be able to select candidates from Member States other than those whose nationals currently encumbered specific posts. The provision

(Ms. Shenwick, United States)

of resolution 35/210 permitting the inheritance of posts by countries whose nationals served primarily on fixed-term contracts was becoming increasingly irrelevant as Member States were moving more frequently to allow their nationals to serve in the Secretariat on permanent contracts.

21. No changes should be introduced to the system of desirable ranges until all Member States had been brought within their currently established ranges. The system had been in effect for three years, not enough time to allow it to make an impact. Also, a further change would create instability in geographical distribution.

22. Her delegation supported the preparation of a comprehensive career development system, the adoption of measures to improve mobility and training opportunities for staff at all duty stations and the continuation of the vacancy management system. It also supported the use of competitive examinations to fill P-3 posts but hoped that that process would not adversely affect the promotion prospects of staff members eligible for promotion from the P-2 level to the P-3 level. Her delegation also hoped that an adequate number of posts would be available to justify the expenses incurred by national competitive examinations.

23. Her delegation remained concerned that, according to document A/46/377, men continued to be recruited and promoted at a higher rate than women. The United States endorsed the Secretary-General's measures to improve the status and representation of women in the Secretariat, and urged Member States to nominate more women candidates, to identify and encourage women to apply for vacant posts, and to establish national rosters of women candidates to be shared with the United Nations Secretariat.

24. She expressed concern at the administation of justice in the Secretariat and believed that the rules and regulations governing the administration of justice should be amended. The current rules and regulations fostered the filing of staff grievances and discouraged management from taking initiatives for fear of reprisal. The Secretary-General should submit a report on the subject to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Her delegation had reservations regarding the conclusions of paragraph 25 of document A/C.5/46/7, which stated that the increased number of allegations of maladministration did not mean a deterioration in the quality of administrative decision-making but rather that staff might have developed a greater confidence in the redress procedures. The underlying causes for the large number of grievances must be addressed through a review of the procedures for filing grievances as well as a review of the personnel management system, and corrective action should be taken as appropriate.

25. With respect to official and private travel of United Nations officials in the United States (A/C.5/46/4, paras. 13 and 14), her delegation stressed that the provisions governing private travel did not restrict official travel of international civil servants. The United States had always ensured the freedom of travel of staff members on official business and it would continue

(Ms. Shenwick, United States)

to do so. There was no contradiction between the obligations of the United States as host country and its inherent right to take necessary legal steps to safeguard its national security.

26. Her delegation was deeply concerned at the high number of cases of arrests, detentions and abductions staff members of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and, in particular, cases in which immediate access to detained staff members, and explanation for their arrest or detention were not being provided. Her delegation wholeheartedly supported the proposals put forward by the ad hoc inter-agency meeting on security matters, held at Geneva in June 1991, particularly with respect to the need and right of detained staff to receive adequate medical care, and the need to maintain a legal link with the detained or arrested staff members through the continued renewal of their contracts until the matter was legally resolved.

27. With respect to future reporting, her delegation requested that instances that occurred after the reporting period should be verbally communicated to the Fifth Committee, as had been done in the current year, and called upon all Member States to support the Secretary-General's efforts in that area.

28. Her delegation had no objections to the proposed amendments to the Staff Rules and Regulations as contained in documents A/C.5/46/13 and A/C.5/46/16.

29. Mr. SAEED (Pakistan) said that, in order for the Organization to undertake a growing number of new tasks, it was essential that the Secretariat should recruit and retain persons with the best professional qualifications and who were adequately motivated, always bearing in mind the fundamental principles contained in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter, namely, the need to secure "the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity" with due regard for "the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible".

30. According to paragraph 8 of the Secretary-General's report (A/46/370), only 2,600 of the 29,246 existing posts in the entire United Nations system were currently subject to geographical distribution. That was a matter of some concern, particularly since that figure was below the base figure of 2,700 referred to in paragraph 18 (a) of document A/C.5/46/2; moreover, that figure had not been revised since 1987. It would be useful to know how many new posts had been created in the United Nations system since 1987 and how many of those new posts had been added to the list of posts to be filled on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The Secretariat should also indicate how many of the 81 new posts proposed by the Secretary-General in the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 were subject to geographical distribution.

31. In its resolution 42/220, the General Assembly decided to review at its forty-fifth session the desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above, taking into account the concept of parity between the membership and contribution factors and the percentage

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

weight of the population factor. At the current session, the Committee should consider increasing the weight of the population factor, whose progressive reduction over the years had adversely affected the most highly populated countries. The Secretary-General's report on desirable ranges (A/C.5/46/2) should facilitate the task of arriving at a more balanced and objective combination of the three criteria.

32. The Secretary-General's report (A/46/377) indicated that progress had been achieved in improving the status of women in the Secretariat. Nevertheless, the Secretariat should intensify its efforts to ensure that, by the end of 1995, 35 per cent of Professional posts would be held by women. As several delegations had already indicated, the objectives of a higher representation of women at all levels and a more equitable geographical representation were compatible and should be pursued simultaneously.

33. Mr. AL-DOSARI (Bahrain) said that, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 25/239 and previous resolutions, there was a need to continue efforts to ensure the equitable representation of countries that were underrepresented or unrepresented in the Secretariat. His delegation was pleased with the progress that had been made in the area of cooperation among States but stressed the need to intensify that cooperation, which should be based on the principles of equity and justice, in order to increase the representation of those countries, especially in higher posts.

34. According to paragraph 15 of the Secretary-General's report (A/46/370), Bahrain was one of the unrepresented Member States. In order to ensure a more equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with the provision of Article 101 of the Charter, it was necessary to recruit more staff from underrepresented or unrepresented countries. To that end, when the Secretariat sent vacancy announcements to the permanent missions, it should allow sufficient time for those announcements to be sent to capitals and for appropriate candidates to apply.

35. Recruitment should be based principally on the criteria of efficiency, competence and integrity. It was therefore necessary to establish procedures for evaluating the competence of staff in order to avoid cases of corruption and to ensure that uniform criteria for promotions were applied.

36. While the General Assembly in its resolution 45/239 had addressed the need to ensure a broad and equitable geographical distribution of staff, high-level posts continued to be the exclusive domain of certain countries. The Secretary-General should therefore be encouraged to continue his efforts to improve the composition of the Secretariat in order to ensure that States that were currently underrepresented or unrepresented were adequately represented in future.

37. Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia) said that the Organization must provide its staff with appropriate conditions of service if it wished to attract and

(Mr. Wibisono, Indonesia)

retain individuals with the professional skills needed to carry out the important tasks entrusted to it.

38. The report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/46/370) indicated that less than 10 per cent of the total number of United Nations posts were subject to geographical distribution; that proportion should be reviewed in the light of the provisions governing recruitment of staff contained in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. The report of the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/46/2 provided a good basis for reviewing the system of desirable ranges, since it presented various options for desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional and higher categories. In that regard, due consideration should be given to the proposal by the Indian delegation, which his own delegation fully supported, that the weight of the population factor should be restored to its earlier level, namely, 7.2 per cent, to ensure that Member States with large populations were treated fairly in the application of the principle of desirable ranges.

39. He regretted to note that the number of underrepresented States had increased; since, as of 30 June 1991, his country had been one of the 24 such States the Secretariat should explain why two of the four candidates who had taken the national competitive examination at Jakarta two years earlier still had not been recruited, and it should expedite the recruitment process.

40. With regard to the status of women in the Secretariat, his delegation was encouraged that the 35 per cent target had been reached at the lower levels in posts subject to geographical distribution; however, progress in the representation of women in posts at higher levels left much to be desired. His delegation appreciated the efforts being made by the Secretary-General to remedy that imbalance and hoped that further progress would be made.

41. Lastly, his delegation wished to convey its readiness to assist the Secretariat in staffing the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) since, according to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, the level of staffing needed for the Mission greatly exceeded the capacity of the Secretariat.

42. Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) welcomed the efforts by the Secretariat to improve the composition of its staff but regretted that they had not been as fruitful as had been expected; the number of underrepresented countries had even increased. Furthermore, even though the number of high-level posts in the Secretariat held by developing countries was greater than in 1990, the percentage of posts occupied by the developing countries at the D-2 level and above remained very low.

43. The report of the Secretary-General in document A/46/377 showed that progress had been made in the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 45/125 and 45/329 C, which had called for an overall participation rate for women of 30 per cent by the end of 1990 and 35 per cent by 1995: in fact, by

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

the end of June 1991, the rate had reached 29.2 per cent. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to ensure the more equitable distribution of posts between men and women throughout the various organizational units of the Secretariat. Member States should be encouraged to cooperate with the Secretariat, which in turn should be urged to take positive and effective measures to correct the imbalance, while taking fully into account the fact that the fundamental criteria for recruitment must be efficiency, competence and integrity and the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution.

44. With regard to secondment, he recalled that in its resolution 45/239 A II, the General Assembly had recognized that there were differences inherent in the secondment of staff from government service to the United Nations and secondment between agencies of the United Nations common system. Accordingly, his delegation believed that the regulations concerning the two types of secondment should be guided by different principles. Specifically, the first type of secondment should result from a contract between the three parties concerned (the United Nations Secretariat, the Government of the country concerned and the staff member), and any alteration in the contract must be made with the express agreement of each of the three parties; any secondment arrangement that was not based on that principle would be absolutely unacceptable.

45. The principle of equitable geographical distribution was one of the funadmental criteria governing the recruitment of United Nations personnel. To ensure the implementation of that principle, the system of secondment and replacement of staff of the same nationality from government services should be applied to posts subject to geographical distribution. Accordingly, his delegation could not support the proposal by the Secretary-General in paragraph 7 of document A/C.5/46/9, that, by virtue of the application of the provisions of section IV of General Assembly resolution 37/126 and in view of recent admission of a number of States to membership in the United Nations, the General Assembly might wish to consider whether the replacement procedure established by resolution 35/210 should cease. Despite the fact that the Secretary-General emphasized in his report that the demise of that exceptional procedure would not prejudice his commitment to ensure equitable geographical distribution, it was evident that once the provision guaranteeing that equity ceased to exist, the principle itself would exist in name only.

46. It also should be pointed out that secondment of staff from government services of Member States helped to maintain a proper ratio between staff members on fixed-term contracts and permanent staff. Fixed-term contracts enabled the United Nations to recruit excellent professionals who could not serve with the Organization on a permanent basis and gave the Secretariat a degree of flexibility to make adjustments of its staff in the light of actual needs. In comparison, permanent contracts provided the United Nations with a stable nucleus of staff members who were fully conversant with their duties. Accordingly, it was essential to ensure a proper ratio between the two types of contracts.

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

47. With regard to the question of desirable ranges, his delegation, having carefully considered the various options presented in document A/C.5/46/2, fully supported the proposal by the delegations of India and Pakistan that the percentage weight of the population factor should be raised. In addition, steps should be taken to ensure the gradual implementation of the principle of parity between the membership and contribution factors.

48. Mr. VALEV (Bulgaria) said that the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and the equitable geographical representation of Member States in the Secretariat were two mutually complementary principles whose consistent implementation would ensure a truly independent, qualified and committed Secretariat. It was important to continue streamlining the Secretariat in accordance with the recommendations of the Group of 18 and, in that connection, his delegation would welcome all constructive proposals for rationalizing the structure of the Secretariat, avoiding unnecessary duplication of activities and improving the utilization of human and financial resources.

49. Regrettably, as could be seen from the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/46/370), no significant progress had been achieved during the past year with respect to improving the representation of Member States in the Secretariat. Although the number of unrepresented Member States had decreased, the number of underrepresented and overrepresented States had increased. His delegation had been very surprised that, of 170 appointments to posts subject to geographical distribution, only 28, or 16.5 per cent, had been of nationals of unrepresented or underrepresented States. That small percentage was insufficient to meet the requirements of General Assembly resolution 45/239 A. His delegation understood the difficulties involved in attaining the established targets and was ready to consider any viable proposal that could facilitate a more balanced representation of Member States in the Secretariat. To that end, it might be desirable to increase the number of posts subject to geographical distribution.

50. His delegation supported the holding of national competitive examinations, which had proved a useful method of identifying and recruiting young, well-qualified staff. His delegation was pleased that the examinations for posts in the P-1, P-2 and P-3 categories had yielded satisfactory results and that the practice would continue and be expanded to other countries and occupational groups. His delegation supported the Secretariat's plans to strengthen the Examinations and Tests Section and looked forward to the national competitive examinations scheduled for the first half of 1992 in his country. It also hoped that appointments of successful candidates would be expedited.

51. With regard to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, although the results could have been more encouraging, the 35 per cent target could still be reached by 1995, provided some additional measures were

(Mr. Valev, Bulgaria)

implemented. The gradual but persistent increase in the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution justified such expectations. As for the representation of women at D-1 level and above, the situation did not invite optimism. In order to reach the 25 per cent target, it would be necessary almost to treble the number of women staff members in the upper echelons within four years' time. That very ambitious, although not impossible, goal could be attained only through strict application of the measures described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/377) and with the full support and cooperation of the Member States. It should be noted that, of all the regional groups, Eastern Europe had the lowest number and the lowest percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution - a situation that should be borne in mind when the appointment of new women staff members were being considered. His delegation believed that the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat should not become an end in itself or be achieved at the expense of the quality of the staff and it was confident that the Secretariat would identify highly qualified and able women recruits without compromising the requirements valid for all United Nations staff.

52. His delegation shared the Secretary-General's belief (A/C.5/46/2, para. 34) that membership, population and contribution were the main criteria necessary to ensure an equitable distribution of posts among Member States. As for the relative weight of each factor, it thought that full parity between the membership and contribution factors should be established gradually. Option J in the report could serve as a final goal. The increase in relative and, consequently, absolute terms of posts distributed according to the membership factor was justified by the increase in the number of Member States. Although there was a need for a certain degree of flexibility in calculating the desirable ranges, a more uniform criterion should be used to determine the relationship between the mid-point and the upper and lower limits. Under the present methodology, for most States, the 15 per cent flexibility factor was replaced by a fixed number of 4.8 posts that, in many cases, was equal to about 70 per cent of their respective mid-points. His delegation believed that, in assessing the level of representation of individual Member States, a more accurate criterion would be the number of staff in relation to the mid-point rather than to the desirable range.

53. Bulgaria supported the suggestion made by other delegations that the item on personnel questions should be considered biennially, in years when the Committee was not required to examine the proposed programme budget.

54. Mr. BAZABIDILA (Congo) said that personnel questions were of particular importance in the current post-cold war era in which the United Nations was at the forefront of international action in various spheres. Its ability to carry out the new tasks depended above all on the competence, integrity and dedication of its staff and administrative organization.

55. Too little had been done to remedy the situation of unrepresented or underrepresented States, most of which were developing countries. The Congo

(Mr. Bazabidila, Congo)

was one of the Member States underrepresented in the Secretariat. As of 30 June 1991, there had been only seven Congolese officials in the United Nations, concentrated for the most part in posts at the P-5, P-4 and P-3 levels. The Congo was not represented in posts at the D-1 and D-2 levels and above, and there were no Congolese women in the Secretariat. It was important to correct that imbalance and to ensure the presence of Congolese nationals at all levels of the Secretariat, in particular in posts at the D-1 and D-2 levels and above. The issue was not one of training, since the Congo had amply demonstrated its ability to provide the Organization with highly qualified personnel.

56. In its recruitment activities, the Secretariat should give particular attention to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, which was perfectly compatible with the Organization's need for staff with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. It was also important to ensure strict compliance with the established procedure for the preparation and issuing of vacancy notices in order to ensure the same recruitment opportunities for nationals of all Member States. whether or not they were already United Nations staff members. The Congo fully supported the principle of holding competitive examinations, provided that the candidates selected were given posts in the United Nations system without delay. Priority should be given to developing countries, in particular the African countries.

57. Despite the measures taken, the current level of representation of women in the Secretariat was still short of the 30 per cent target set for the end of 1990. There was also a risk that the target of 35 per cent by 1995, established in General Assembly resolution 45/239 C, might not be reached. While the number of women in posts at the D-1 level and above had increased in 1991, greater progress was necessary. His delegation thought that women were still underrepresented in the Secretariat and attached great importance to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 45/239 C and 44/185. It therefore requested the Secretary-General to draw up a programme for the period 1991 to 1995 aimed at improving the situation and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

58. As for the representation of Member States, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the problem lay not with finding a new methodology for determining desirable ranges, but with the introduction of appropriate adjustments to the various factors in order to ensure a geographical distribution more in line with the spirit of the Charter. The Member States should opt for a system of desirable ranges based essentially on solidarity and the will to reach the established objectives, with the responsible and effective participation of all Member States. A very marked imbalance between the coefficients assigned to the various factors (membership, population and contribution) would be out of keeping with the desire to establish a new world order based on equality among States and division of responsibilities. Consequently, of the options suggested by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/46/2, his delegation unquestionably preferred option J, but it could accept option F if that would facilitate consensus.

(Mr. Bazabidila, Congo)

59. Staff morale had a definite impact on the functioning of the Organization. For that reason, career development, the improvement of the conditions of service, training and rotation should always be fundamental concerns of the Secretary-General. High mobility would be desirable in certain occupational groups in the United Nations system in order to diversify the experience of staff members and broaden their career opportunities. His delegation therefore requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session a structured, coherent career development plan that would guarantee to United Nations staff respect for the Staff Regulations, as well as promotion and salary increases.

60. In the view of his delegation, it was necessary to put an end to the abuse of authority and disregard of the rules of staff-management relations at certain duty stations. Such practices created tensions and hindered the implementation of United Nations programmes.

61. His delegation had noted with regret the cases of violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of international officials mentioned in document A/C.5/46/4. It strongly supported the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts to promote the observance of international agreements relating to the privileges and immunities of international organizations and their officials and hoped that all Member States would support them as strongly.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
29th meeting
held on
Monday, 11 November 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued) (A/46/6/Rev.1 and A/46/7)

AGENDA ITEM 108: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/46/16 and Add.1)

First reading (continued)

Section 29. Protection of and assistance to refugees

Section 29A. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the Secretary-General was proposing the transfer of two posts from extrabudgetary funding to the regular budget, pursuant to a proposal that posts of chiefs of missions in the least developed countries where UNHCR operated should be recognized as a proper charge to the regular budget. The proposed transfer accounted for the rate of real growth of 1.0 per cent. The Committee would note that regular budget funding accounted for only a small fraction of total resources under the section.

2. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that over the years there had been much discussion concerning the proportion of UNHCR's total funding that should come from the regular budget. The General Assembly had taken the view that appropriations under the regular budget were not intended to cover the bulk of UNHCR's costs, but were more in the nature of a subsidy. The statute of UNHCR provided that administrative expenditures should be financed under the regular budget, with operational expenditures being financed from voluntary contributions.

3. The question of transfers of posts from extrabudgetary to regular budget funding had been the subject of debate over many years. In 1989 the High Commissioner had agreed with the Secretary-General that no further proposals to transfer posts would be made prior to 1999. The Advisory Committee had been somewhat surprised to find that the agreement had been set aside and that the transfer of 17 posts to the regular budget over several bienniums was now being proposed. The Advisory Committee had not concurred in the proposed transfer at two of the posts in question in the biennium 1992-1993.

4. Ms. ERIKSSON FOGH (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic delegations, said that there was a need for UNHCR funding to be more predictable. The current uncertainty led to an ad hoc approach to assisting refugees and prevented the financing of long-term solutions. The proposal to transfer two posts from extrabudgetary funding to the regular budget was therefore a step in the right direction. Indeed, the Nordic delegations would support transfer of all the 17 posts referred to in paragraph 29A.14 of the proposed programme budget.

(Ms. Eriksson Fogh, Sweden)

5. The statute of UNHCR provided for financing under the United Nations budget. Since 1958, however, there had been no increase in the number of posts funded from the regular budget, primarily owing to financial constraints. Given the increase in UNHCR activities the Secretary-General's proposal was a very modest one.

6. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that his Government strongly supported the work of UNHCR, to which it had made substantial voluntary contributions. Nevertheless, he noted with regret the Secretary-General's request for additional regular budget funding of UNHCR posts. Such funding, which constituted less than 5 per cent of the total resources available to the agency, should never become a significant source, and decisions should not be taken which might undermine the financial support of major donors.

7. Over the years various proposals had been advanced for regular budget funding of administrative staff. As noted by the Advisory Committee, the Secretary-General had already violated the understanding that staffing arrangements would remain unchanged for four bienniums subsequent to 1990-1991, and he was concerned that further changes might be proposed in the future. His delegation had indicated previously that it could accept the transfer of some posts on an exceptional basis if there was no increase in overall staff levels and no real increase in the regular budget. Unfortunately, that was not the case, in addition to which it appeared that the posts in question carried few administrative responsibilities. In that connection he asked how many refugees UNHCR had responsibility for in each country that would receive a new regular budget post under the proposals.

8. His delegation had long opposed the transfer of extrabudgetary posts to the regular budget, a position supported by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. At the same time his Government recognized the difficulties facing UNHCR. More efforts were needed to reduce the cost of the programme through more efficient utilization of its resources. In the long run, obviously, the best solution would be to eliminate the conditions that gave rise to refugees flows.

9. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the conclusion and recommendation of CPC on section 29A, as contained in paragraph 354 of its report (A/46/16).

10. It was so decided.

11. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $42,073,600 under section 29A of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 29A would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 29B. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

12. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the Secretary-General was proposing the transfer of three posts from extrabudgetary funding to the regular budget under section 29B.

13. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee, in paragraph 29B.7 of its report, had recommended that the General Assembly should take a policy decision with regard to the transfer of international UNRWA posts from extrabudgetary to regular budget funding. The question went back to the twenty-ninth session, and General Assembly resolution 3331 B (XXIX). At that time the Secretary-General had stated that the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations would apply to personnel costs in respect of international staff at UNRWA. The General Assembly, in resolution 3331 B (XXIX), had decided that expenses for salaries of international staff in the service of UNRWA which would otherwise be a charge on voluntary contributions should with effect from 1 January 1975 be financed by the regular budget for the duration of the Agency's mandate. The question had subsequently arisen of whether the resolution meant that international staff could be transferred to the regular budget. The Advisory Committee had concurred in the Secretary-General's view that the resolution should be interpreted to mean that international posts could be established only in accordance with proper budgetary procedure, namely, following review by the Advisory Committee and approval by the General Assembly.

14. The Commissioner-General had maintained that the Agency's right to establish international staff was not limited. The Advisory Committee, however, had taken the view that the Commissioner-General could not establish such posts on his own initiative and then request transfers to the regular budget, since such a procedure presented the Fifth Committee with a fait accompli. The General Assembly must clarify the situation and select one of the options indicated in paragraph 29B.7 of the Advisory Committee's report. Pending such clarification, the Advisory Committee had not been able to recommend approval of the transfers requested.

15. In the biennium 1984-1985 the transfer of seven posts had been proposed, but the Advisory Committee had agreed only to the establishment of four posts. The three remaining posts had now grown to 16, created on the initiative of the Commissioner-General, and the Assembly must now decide whether all or none should be funded from the regular budget. ACABQ was neither recommending nor rejecting acceptance of the proposed transfers, and the recommended reduction of $600,400 was merely provisional.

16. Ms. BERENGUER (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said that CPC, in paragraphs 359 and 360 of its report, had noted the proposed redeployment of five posts from Vienna to field offices, and had recommended approval of the programme narrative of section 29B.

17. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that his Government had traditionally been the largest donor to UNRWA. Nevertheless, his delegation regretted the proposed transfer of posts. Such mechanisms as the transfer of posts to the regular budget would not add to the overall level of resources available to voluntary programmes, since increased assessed contributions could lead to a reduction in voluntary contributions. His delegation concurred in the view of the Advisory Committee that no authority existed for the transfer to the regular budget of the 16 posts established on an extrabudgetary basis. His delegation strongly supported the option proposed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 29B.7 (b).

18. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the twelve States members of the European Community, said that the Twelve attached great importance to the work of UNRWA. In the view of the Twelve, General Assembly resolution 3331 B (XXIX) had been intended only to alleviate the financial crisis besetting UNRWA at that time. Further, the Twelve recalled the Group of 18 recommendation that the practice of transferring extrabudgetary posts to the regular budget should be discouraged. The European Community delegations noted the Advisory Committee's comment that clarification of the resolution was required, and supported the option proposed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 29B.7 (b).

19. Mr. RAE (India) said that his delegation, while also supporting UNRWA and being a contributor, did not concur in the proposed transfer of posts to the regular budget. Resolution 3331 B (XXIX) related only to the circumstances prevailing at the time, and could not be used to justify further transfers. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's option in paragraph 29B.7 (b).

20. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on section 29B, as contained in paragraphs 359 and 360 of its report (A/46/16).

21. It was so decided.

22. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $20,129,200 under section 29B of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 29B would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 30. Disaster relief operations

23. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), referring to paragraph 30.1 of the proposed programme budget, said that it had originally been intended to provide details separately on staff and resources for the secretariat for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. However, the documents relating to the Decade now before the Second Committee gave little indication of administrative and budgetary

(Mr. Baudot)

implications and he was therefore not sure what further details could be provided to the Fifth Committee except in regard to the fund already established and the current status of the secretariat.

24. Ms. BERENGUER (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said that, as indicated in paragraph 362 of the CPC report (A/46/16), several delegations had pointed out during the discussion in CPC that functions pertaining to the role of the United Nations in addressing disaster and emergency situations appeared to be fragmented in their presentation in the proposed programme budget. In that context, references had been made to section 30, section 6 (subprogramme 4, Special emergency programmes) and section 29A. A general recommendation on the question of fragmentation was made in paragraph 52 of the CPC report.

25. With regard to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, concern has been expressed in CPC over the lack of information in section 30 on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/236. The Committee recommended, in paragraph 368 of its report, the inclusion in that section of a programme narrative relating to the Decade in accordance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

26. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) noted from paragraph 30.18 of the budget proposal that an additional P-5 post was requested to strengthen the information dissemination capacity of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO). His delegation wished to review proposals to ensure effective implementation of activities in subprogramme 3 during the informal consultations.

27. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) asked what steps the Secretariat was taking in response to the CPC recommendation concerning the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. He also wished to know what proposals the Secretariat might make regarding the additional P-5 post requested for subprogramme 3 (Disaster information).

28. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) replied that the Secretariat had not yet prepared a text relating to the Decade for inclusion in the programme narrative of section 30 but might provide a draft for consideration during the informal discussions if required. Concerning the additional P-5 post, it was not clear whether the Advisory Committee was recommending redeployment within section 30 or from another section. Once the Committee had decided on those matters, the Secretariat would endeavour to put its decisions into effect.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on section 30, as contained in paragraphs 366 to 369 of its report (A/46/16).

30. It was so decided.

31. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $7,831,300 under section 30 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 30 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Section 31. Public information

32. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) pointed out that, in addition to the estimated regular budget requirements of $100,993,900 under section 31, extrabudgetary resources expected to be available to the Department of Public Information (DPI) in 1992-1993 were projected at $6 million and some $12.3 million were requested for public information activities under other sections. The Under-Secretary-General had expressed concern that the United Nations was allocating too small an amount for public information compared with the resources available in the private sector. The Advisory Committee, however, observed that few budget sections contained estimates above $100 million and was not of the view that the Department was being starved of resources. While staff costs, as in other sections, accounted for up to 80 per cent of the total, the Advisory Committee felt that there was room for the Secretariat to use the resources provided with acceptable flexibility.

33. In paragraph 31.6 of its report (A/46/7), the Advisory Committee referred to the Secretary-General's further review of public information activities and looked forward to the report on their consolidation that would be submitted to the General Assembly in 1992.

34. The Advisory Committee was not convinced of the need for the proposed reclassification of the post of Director of the Communications and Project Management Division from the D-1 to the D-2 level (see para. 31.10 of its report). That question and the other proposed reclassifications would no doubt be examined in informal consultations.

35. Paragraph 31.14 of the Advisory Committee's report noted an arrangement made with the external publisher of the Yearbook of the United Nations to deal with the production of backlog editions and he hoped that the new arrangement would ensure timely publication. Regarding future arrangements for Development Forum, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of a contribution of $200,000 towards the financing of issues for 1992 and provisional approval of the same amount for 1993 subject to submission of a performance report for 1992. Lastly, he trusted that DPI would give serious consideration to the Advisory Committee's comments in paragraph 31.17 of its report concerning the United Nations information centres.

36. Ms. BERENGUER (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said that CPC had noted in paragraph 388 of its report (A/46/16) that the format of section 31 did not present a clear relationship between the proposed activities and the resources requested, and had further noted that it was

(Ms. Berenguer)

difficult to determine the distribution of resources between Headquarters and the field offices and the relationship with public information activities conducted under other sections. Accordingly, it felt that the Secretariat should comply with the format for the standard presentation of the budget.

37. The discussion in CPC had also focused on the question of linguistic diversity. In paragraph 389 of its report, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information issue as many of its publications and documents as possible in Arabic and other official languages of the United Nations. The purpose was to maintain the requisite linguistic balance.

38. Concerning subprogramme 1 (Promotional services), CPC had emphasized that DPI should give due attention to all priorities of the United Nations as adopted in the medium-term plan and elsewhere (see para. 390 of its report). Lastly, the Committee had emphasized the importance of the Department's objective in promoting the goals and the activities of the United Nations (para. 387).

39. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that the reductions recommended by the Advisory Committee under section 31 could be regarded as justified in view of the high total resource level. The dissemination of information about the Organization's work in the political, economic and social fields was, however, crucial in promoting the goals and activities of the United Nations. His delegation appreciated DPI's efforts in that regard and believed that they would be facilitated by the new concerted approach and realistic attitude of Member States, as demonstrated in particular in the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) and in the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly.

40. In the discussion in CPC it had nevertheless been pointed out that no clear strategy emerged from section 31 of the proposed programme budget. It was to be hoped that the formulation and implementation of information programmes would in future be geared to achieving a greater impact on the public at large and to enhancing the image of the United Nations as projected by the mass media.

41. His delegation encouraged efforts to reduce the costs of the United Nations information centres. Due attention should be given to the special circumstances under which each operated and use could be made of local United Nations offices, where appropriate, to carry out proposed activities. That would involve strengthening coordination between field offices, including those of the United Nations Development Programme, and Headquarters.

42. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that although the Department of Public Information seemed to be making some effort to reflect the rapid changes taking place in the world overall, its proposed work programme and budget continued to focus on many activities that were of marginal value or

(Mr. Cohen, United States)

did not present a balanced view of important global issues. He noted the observation in paragraph 31.7 of the Advisory Committee's report that while many of the products under section 31 were proposed by the Secretary-General in order to respond to requests by the General Assembly, there was room for flexibility and creativity in the actual implementation of those requests.

43. Among the many outmoded and ineffective information activities was the Yearbook of the United Nations. No real progress had been made in eliminating the backlog in publishing the Yearbook though more than $1 million had been spent on it over the past few years. General Assembly resolution 40/252 I had called for the production of abbreviated versions of the Yearbook until the backlog was eliminated and he wondered why the Secretariat had not chosen to implement that resolution. It seemed to take a flexible approach in deciding which resolutions to implement, generally ignoring those aimed at improving economy and efficiency while defending the continued funding of marginal activities mandated many years previously. He hoped that the new arrangements in regard to the Yearbook would yield results and asked whether any of the posts previously created to eliminate the backlog would continue to be funded during the biennium 1992-1993.

44. Press releases on the meetings of most United Nations bodies should be eliminated completely, as should the hundreds of releases issued on subjects of very marginal interest to the world media. Terminating those releases could free resources for activities of higher priority.

45. The Advisory Committee had noted that the financial situation of Development Forum continued to deteriorate. He asked how long it had been subsidized from the regular budget. Development Forum was only one of many United Nations publications on that subject and the time had perhaps come to consolidate them with a view to eliminating those which appeared to lack readers.

46. The narrative on activities relating to Palestine gave little evidence that the United Nations intended to make much effort to provide balanced and unbiased reporting on that important question. It was to be hoped that future activities would adequately reflect the views of all the parties involved in the issue. He noted that Palestine information activities had been designated as having high priority and asked what the specific legislative mandate was for that designation. He would appreciate confirmation from the Secretariat that the designation was in full conformity with the relevant regulations governing programme planning. He reiterated his delegation's long-standing reservation regarding the funding of those programmes, estimated at $854,000.

47. His delegation would also like further details regarding DPI staff to be sent to the forthcoming Conference on Environment and Development. He asked whether any staff members beyond the 27 to be financed out of the regular budget would be travelling to Brazil, and why it was necessary to send such a large advance party a week before the Conference started. As the Advisory

(Mr. Cohen, United States)

Committee had pointed out on many occasions, the Department sent too many staff members to cover conferences held away from Headquarters. An in-depth assessment of its policies in that regard should be undertaken immediately.

48. The need for 22 staff members to provide administrative support to the Department, in addition to the 22 staff members in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, was questionable. He asked why the two units were separate, and whether, in the interests of economy, they could not be merged or transfer some of those services to the central administrative units at Headquarters.

49. Lastly, his delegation supported the observation of the Advisory Committee, in paragraph 31.17 of its report, that the time had come to issue new guidelines for the establishment of additional information centres and for the management of the existing centres. The United States had recently conducted an independent review of information centres and found many not to be functioning adequately. In one country, the centre received some 500 kilograms of publications from Headquarters each week, which its staff was under constant pressure to dispose of since there was no room to store them. Clearly, severe imbalances remained in the distribution of resources between Headquarters and the centres, and among the centres themselves. The Secretariat should not ask for more resources for the centres without first eliminating existing problems. His delegation hoped that the report to be submitted to the Committee on Information in 1992 would respond to the concerns raised by the Advisory Committee.

50. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, stressed the importance of the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting an informed understanding of the activities of the United Nations. The Department accounted for 4.2 per cent of the proposed budget for 1992-1993. Given the increasing world interest in the Organization, it was essential that it should perform its task effectively and efficiently. In that connection, the Twelve noted that the resources requested under section 31 did not represent the total resources allocated to public information activities, since various other sections contained such resource proposals. The Twelve supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation referred to in paragraph 31.6, that the public information activities of the United Nations system should be consolidated, and looked forward to the report on that issue due in 1992. In addition to such consolidation, a more fundamental approach might be required to improve the Department's effectiveness and efficiency. The Committee on Information should carry out a detailed examination of the Department's programmes at its 1992 session, taking into account previous reports including the evaluation report.

51. The Twelve agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 31.17 concerning the need for new guidelines on information centres and services. They also emphasized that the involvement of the Department in

(Mr. Spaans, Netherlands)

world conferences should be regarded as part of its regular tasks. As far as proposed expenditures for such conferences were concerned, the Twelve looked forward to discussing the relevant statements of programme budget implications.

52. Mr. LEV (Israel) noted his delegation's strong reservations concerning the activities of the Department of Public Information in connection with the question of Palestine. The so-called information activities relating to that issue were counterproductive and did not contribute to a peaceful solution of the region's problems.

53. Mr. SY (Senegal) noted that there was, unfortunately, some inconsistency between the steps taken in such bodies as the Committee on Information, where stress was laid on the importance of DPI activities and the need to strengthen them, and in the Fifth Committee where, in obedience to perhaps another set of interests, difficulties were raised regarding a number of questions. For example, reference had been made to the excessive number of press releases. His delegation thought press releases very useful: they might perhaps be made more concise and more emphasis placed on the work of particular bodies, but eliminating them altogether would be very dangerous for the Organization. The world needed to know what the United Nations was doing, particularly at a time when its reputation and credibility stood higher than it had in many years.

54. The question of Palestine and the priority to be accorded to information activities connected with it, were of special interest to Senegal. Since the question had first come into being, the United Nations had made an effort to make the international community sensitive to it. At a time when it was of particular interest, thanks in part to the work of the Department, activities in that connection should not be cut back. The United Nations should continue to play its role in the light of the situation as it developed.

55. The information centres had an important role to play. The question was not whether they were needed but how they could be made more dynamic. A final decision on the matter must await the submission of the report due in 1992. The Fifth Committee should of course take account of the points raised by the Advisory Committee, but it should not put the Department of Public Information in a position where it would be unable to fulfil a role that was more important than ever in the present-day world.

56. Mr. EL DEEB (Egypt) said that in the wave of democratization currently sweeping the world public information that mirrored those developments was increasingly important. One such development was the situation of Palestine, currently the centre of the international community's attention. The United Nations should continue its special interest in the question and the information programmes on Palestine should be maintained at the level agreed upon by the international community, until all the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council had been implemented and a settlement of the Palestinian question achieved. In that connection, he drew attention to the Select Bibliography on the question of Palestine issued by

(Mr. El Deeb, Egypt)

the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in 1976 and expressed the hope that an updated version would be issued shortly. The special funding of the Department's programme on Palestine should continue until a complete and just solution of the overall Middle East issue had been achieved.

57. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom noted that it was indicated in paragraph 31.8 of the Advisory Committee's report that the Secretary-General proposed a total of 668 established posts for 1992-1993 and that the total number of established posts and posts in the Professional category and above was unchanged from the approved 1990-1991 budget. However, the initial estimates for 1990-1991 had provided for 662 established posts. His delegation would welcome a clarification of the reasons for the increase. He also recalled that the revised estimates presented at the forty-fifth session for the section on public information should have provided for a reduction in current expenses. His delegation would like that issue also to be clarified as it might wish to pursue it in the informal consultations.

58. Mr. LAOUARI (Algeria) expressed general support for the Department's activities. The promotional services described in paragraph 31.9 of the budget document were in keeping with the major interests of Member States although the question of the economic recovery and rehabilitation of Africa should perhaps be added. His delegation particularly supported the priority accorded to activities connected with the struggle against apartheid and the question of Palestine and endorsed the views expressed by the representatives of Egypt and Senegal in that regard. He noted with concern the sharp decline in funds for contractual translation, brought about by the plan to use only one language at regional seminars in order to save resources. He asked what the current practice was for regional seminars, where participants might speak different languages and said he would like an assurance that the proposed reduction would not jeopardize quality. His delegation strongly supported the activities of the regional information centres. The Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly had consistently requested that their activities should be strengthened and more adequate resources allocated to them. The Secretary-General's proposals would provide for modest growth of only 1.5 per cent and his delegation hoped that that small increase would not have an adverse impact on the centres' activities.

59. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that his delegation attached great importance to Development Forum and continued to support the efforts mandated by General Assembly resolution 41/68 A to put the financing of that publication on a sound and stable footing. He therefore had misgivings about the Advisory Committee's recommendations in paragraph 31.16 of its report. His delegation also had concerns about the funding of the publication of African Recovery. His delegation would like further information from the Secretariat on the matter in the light of paragraph 179 of the CPC report.

60. His delegation would like an assurance that adequate arrangements were in place for convening the forthcoming seminar for non-governmental organizations

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

referred to in subprogramme 2, in view of the important topic it was expected to discuss.

61. His delegation was convinced of the importance of the information centres. It would like the Secretary-General to review the adequacy of their coverage, particularly those providing services to more than one country. It was to be hoped that the review would lead to a strengthening of the information activities of the centres and not merely be a cost-cutting exercise.

62. The Department should not relax its efforts with regard to apartheid. He urged it to continue to ensure adequate coverage for anti-apartheid activities until such time as the majority of the population in South Africa was able to participate in the democratic process on an equal footing.

63. Mr. AHMED (Iraq) endorsed the comments made by the representatives of Egypt, Senegal and Algeria. His delegation supported all United Nations activities relating to information in general and those relating to the Palestinian cause in particular. Although they could not be a substitute for the return of the full rights of the Palestinian people, they helped to raise awareness regarding those rights. Peace would be best served by restoration of those rights by those who had usurped them.

64. Mr. NDAYIZIGA (Burundi) stressed the importance of radio programmes in countries where there was much illiteracy. DPI should place more emphasis on radio, so that developing countries, especially in Africa would be better informed about the enhanced role of the United Nations. His delegation was therefore concerned at the proposal in paragraph 31.26 to distribute news bulletins and magazines on United Nations meetings and other activities, in French and other languages, directly to broadcasting organizations, via telephone circuit, at their expense. He asked whether countries which were not able to afford such costs would be denied the programmes. Regarding television news and magazines referred to in paragraph 31.27, he regretted that what was available in French did not seem very impressive. The programme "United Nations in Action" mentioned in subparagraph (c), was a weekly television magazine lasting only three minutes and he wondered whether that was really enough to keep the French-speaking peoples of Africa informed about the United Nations. He noted that "World Chronicle" in English lasted for 30 minutes. In the same connection, he asked why there was such a long delay in issuing press releases in French. The Department was well aware that information that was not timely lost much of its value.

65. His delegation agreed, on the whole, with the comments of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 31.17 of its report. Joint measures should also be taken in order to make the information centres viable. Given the large amount of resources allocated to them, it was important to make them more effective. His delegation believed that it was important for a centre's programme to be elaborated jointly by the Department or its representative and the beneficiary

(Mr. Ndayiziga, Burundi)

country. In that way it would be possible to identify what was useful and suitable and to avoid situations such as that referred to by the United States representative. A programme that was jointly designed and implemented would be in the interest both of the Department and of the host country.

66. Mr. WORONIECKI (Poland) said that there would clearly be a need during the coming biennium for the dissemination of more information about the United Nations and the work of its agencies. As the estimate under section 31 was not a small one, greater attention should be paid to redeploying the Department's resources to meet new situations, rather than simply adding to its responsibilities.

67. With specific reference to United Nations information centres, paragraph 31.4 of the proposed programme budget made no mention of those for which the legal basis existed but which had not yet been established, such as the planned centre in Warsaw. The Polish Government was prepared to pay more than half the cost of the centre and hoped that negotiations for its establishment would be successful.

68. Mr. MONTHE (Cameroon) said that the resources requested were more than adequate compared with those requested under other sections of the proposed programme budget and the distribution of those resources among the various programmes was appropriate. His delegation was satisfied with the quantity of the Department's output but would like to see greater emphasis placed on economic development. There was a need for further improvements in the quality of United Nations information activities, in particular relating to apartheid and African development issues, which deserved more attention. As for its radio and television programmes, the United Nations was handicapped by the need to rely on others for delivery of its services. Consideration should be given to how the Organization could become independent of other organizations in the broadcasting field.

69. The Department's output also lacked linguistic and cultural balance. French was still neglected as compared with English and the Department must make a serious effort to widen the range of its outputs.

70. The number of United Nations information centres should be increased, rather than reduced, and they must be provided with adequate resources to carry out their work effectively. There should be a standard policy towards the centres so as to avoid such anomalies as the funding of its centres in developed countries from the regular budget while funding for centres in developing countries was sought from the Governments concerned.

71. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that he was not convinced by the explanation given in paragraph 31.52 of the proposals for the growth in regular budget resources required for the Communications and Project Management Division's external printing and binding. That growth and the requirement for coverage of special conferences made up the bulk of the large increase shown in

(Mr. Inomata, Japan)

table 31.4. He wondered why the Organization's investment in internal printing capacity had not produced greater economies under that particular item of expenditure. There was a reference in paragraph 31.43 to a provision of $56,200 to cover the cost of publishing the annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. He questioned whether that report should be published only in English, French and Spanish and wondered if it might be possible to print it internally, to make savings, and in other languages, to achieve the greater cultural diversification advocated by the representative of Cameroon.

72. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to points raised by delegations, said that the Yearbook of the United Nations was regarded as one of the Organization's most important publications. The additional posts authorized in an effort to reduce the backlog in its publication were no longer in the proposed programme budget. It was hoped that the arrangements with the publishers mentioned in the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7, para. 31.14) would produce a satisfactory solution to the problem. The idea of publishing abbreviated versions of the Yearbook seemed incompatible with its character but he would revert to the subject after consulting DPI.

73. With regard to the questions about Development Forum, he believed that funding had been provided for that publication since 1980. The Advisory Committee's recommendations on the financing of Development Forum in 1992 and 1993 (A/46/7, para. 31.16), seemed particularly wise.

74. On the question of the priority accorded to activities relating to Palestine, the priorities in section 31 were more in keeping with the rules than those in other sections. That was because the rules required priorities to be set at programme element level, which had been done in the case of section 31, whereas priorities elsewhere in the budget proposals had been set at the level of activities. If there was a problem of priorities in section 31, it affected the low priority rather than the high priority items.

75. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, there was no provision for more than 27 staff to travel to the Conference, as indicated in paragraph 31.125. On the important general points raised by the representative of the Netherlands, resources were sometimes provided specifically for certain conferences, while it was assumed, in other cases, that the estimates would allow costs arising from conferences to be absorbed. It would probably be necessary to revert to the problem when the Committee addressed the question of the financial implications of the World Conference on Human Rights scheduled for 1993.

76. In reply to the representative of Algeria, a single working language was used at regional seminars only when it was ascertained that it would not be an obstacle to all taking an active part.

(Mr. Baudot)

77. In reply to the request from the representative of Uganda for assurances about Africa Recovery, now covered under section 11A, he believed that implementation of the recommendation in paragraph 179 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/46/16) would present no problem, but he would revert to the matter during the informal consultations.

78. He could assure the Committee that the Secretariat and DPI, whose representatives had been present, had taken note of all the other issues raised. The intervention by the representative of Japan on the subject of external printing and binding costs raised the interesting question of justifying reductions in estimates as well as increases. That might be a subject for the ad hoc technical seminar proposed by CPC to review questions of budget methodology.

79. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that his delegation could not be satisfied with the Advisory Committee's recommendation of only provisional approval for the financing of Development Forum in 1993. Nor was it content with arrangements for the publication of Africa Recovery under section 11A.

80. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee's recommendation of provisional approval for the financing of Development Forum in 1993 was quite straightforward. The word "provisional" indicated that it wished to know the results of the initiatives to secure a sound and stable financial basis for Development Forum that were mentioned in paragraph 31.16 of its report before considering a definite figure for 1993.

81. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on section 31, as contained in paragraphs 387 to 391 of its report (A/46/16).

82. It was so decided.

83. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $99,607,300 under section 31 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading, on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 31 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.